

Stillman F. Kelley House
49 Washington Avenue
Cambridge
Middlesex County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-1025

HABS
MASS
9-CAMB
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

STILLMAN F. KELLEY HOUSE

HABS
MASS
9-CAMB

Location: 49 Washington Avenue, Cambridge, Middlesex County, 26-Massachusetts

Present Owner: Cambridge Junior College

Present Occupant: Mrs. Irving Richards

Present Use: Classrooms and offices for the College

Statement of Significance: This building is a fine Queen Anne style house with a variety of projecting bays, irregular fenestration, and richly detailed ornament, in a setting that allows direct comparison with both contemporary and later domestic work of the architects Hartwell and Richardson.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: References are to Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and Probate.
 - 1886 Chloe C. Kelley (wife of Stillman F.) purchased land on Washington Avenue (part of former Austin estate) from William P. Kuhn, Martha A. Clarke, and Samuel G. Clarke. Deed Book 1754, p. 356. Work on house began in 1887.
 - 1927 After the death of Chloe C. Kelley, Grace Lincoln purchased the house and land from Edmund S. Kelley, executor of the estate. Deed Book 5132, p. 302.
 - 1928 Lincoln Field School acquired the house and land. Deed Book 5198, p. 157.
 - 1935 Cambridge Savings Bank (holder of a 1930 mortgage from Lincoln Field School) took possession of the house and land. Deed Book 5931, p. 515.
 - 1936 Cambridge School of Liberal Arts (now called Cambridge Junior College) purchased the house and land. Deed Book 6089, p. 135.
2. Date of erection: 1887.
3. Architect: Hartwell and Richardson. (Henry Walker Hartwell, 1833-1920; William Cummings Richardson, 1854-1935)

4. Builder: Leander Greeley.
5. Original plans, construction, etc.: Original building permit granted June 16, 1887. Building Permit 674. There is a set of eight original blueprints by Hartwell and Richardson, not dated, including four floor plans and four elevations. Blueprints in possession of Cambridge Junior College, 49 Washington Avenue, Cambridge. There are photocopies of the eight sheets at the Cambridge Historical Commission, 57 Inman Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
6. Alterations and additions: Reference is to Building Permit. 1928 (30753) Alterations; chimney torn down; kitchen enlarged. Architect: Benjamin Proctor; Mechanic: Harold G. Bennett.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

This house was built for a highly successful businessman in both Cambridge and Boston. Born in East Dennis, Massachusetts in 1851, Stillman Kelley had gained a considerable fortune by 1887 in a large sugar and molasses business, I. O. Whiting & Company, in which he had worked himself up to a top position. By the 1890's I. O. Whiting & Company had become Stillman F. Kelley & Company. Kelley was also the director of several other companies, and an active partner in Curtis Davis & Company, an important Cambridge soap manufacturer. His house at 49 Washington Avenue was described while it was being built, as "the handsomest and costliest residence in Cambridge." (Cambridge Tribune, February 2, 1889)

C. Bibliography:

Cambridge Tribune, January 22, 1887.

Diagram of building lots in Austin estate.

Cambridge Tribune, April 30, 1887.

Cambridge Tribune, June 18, 1887.

Work to begin.

Cambridge Tribune, August 6, 1887.

Full description of house.

Cambridge Tribune, January 28, 1888.

Description of house in progress.

Cambridge Tribune, February 2, 1889.

Cambridge Tribune, "Cambridge Semi-Centennial, 1846-1896,"
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1896, p. 52.
Exterior photograph.

Cambridge Tribune, "Souvenir Number: The Harvard Bridge, The
University City," Cambridge, Massachusetts, June 1890, p. 23.
Exterior photograph.

Gilman, Arthur, ed. The Cambridge of Eighteen Hundred and
Ninety-Six. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1896, pp. 98, 132.
Exterior photographs.

Rettig, Robert Bell. Guide to Cambridge Architecture: Ten
Walking Tours. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press,
1969.

Prepared by Susan Maycock
Survey Associate
Cambridge Historical Commission
June 20, 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This house is an excellent example of the American version of the "Queen Anne" manner by Hartwell and Richardson, retaining its fine interior trim and containing an exceptionally impressive stair hall.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The house is 48 feet x 65 feet, excluding the porch; two-and-a-half stories. The building is basically a rectangular block with a rear ell, but has many bays and porches.
2. Foundations: Pink rusticated granite blocks of random size, generally rectangular. There are dark red sandstone blocks around the cellar windows, with red mortar. Below grade is rough masonry of slate (?) fragments in mortar. Basement exterior walls are of random rough stone, which is whitewashed. Basement interior dividing walls are of brick, with arched openings where necessary for doors. There is a gray granite slab, approximately three square feet, with a round hole in the center, approximately one foot in diameter, which leads into a coal bin on the west side of the house. Foundation under the kitchen, the south-west corner, is concrete, from a later enlargement of the

kitchen about 1928.

3. Wall construction, finish and color: Clapboards with several sculptured inset panels, all painted white. The panels are either carved wood or cast mastic and the decorations include a large shell with foliage and berries surrounding it on front of porch pediment. There are ten small panels below cornice on west bay. Below these in the center is one large panel with stylized four-dish vertical fountain swathed in acanthus. There are two small panels in the balustrade around the top of the northeast turret with a small grotesque (face) in upper part, and the remaining panels are filled with acanthus, etc.
4. Structural system, framing: Apparently stud walls.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: The front porch has a pedimented roof with a shell panel above the entrance and a covered gallery to the east. The roof is supported by turned spiral posts. Front porch is approached by four steps of dark red sandstone. The west side stoop into the kitchen is very simple with four red sandstone steps. The rear entrance into the old kitchen has six modern wooden steps which rise from one gray granite step into a small inset entryway. Six gray granite steps descend to the arched cellar entrance. The rear entry stair on the east side is a quarter turn with landing composed of six and four steps. The upper four and platform are concrete, the others are modern wood but rest on gray granite plinth. There is a modern fire escape on the southeast side of the central block.
6. Chimneys: There are four chimneys. The largest is for the front east parlor and is of smooth brick with pink mortar. There is a rough red sandstone plaque (cartouche) inset into the brick, approximately 2 feet x 3 feet, with acanthus, fleur-de-lis and flowers around the edges, and a convex center which is undecorated. A tie-rod stabilizes the chimney to the roof and the tie-plate is treated in elaborate wrought iron spirals. The three other chimneys are brick: one between west parlor and dining room, one at rear of east back parlor, and one for the old kitchen.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The double front door has two glass panels with the central pane surrounded by eighteen bottle glass panes on each door. To the side and above these doors are more bottle glass windows. There are four other doors: one at the west stoop, a rear entry, an east cellar door, and an east

entrance. The doors to the fire escape, probably later, seem to be cut from windows. At the recessed entrance is a small door, approximately 6 feet from the floor, into which ice was delivered for the ice-box in the kitchen.

- b. Windows and shutters: The front of the first and second floors and the east and west sides of the front section have one-over-one lights. The top attic story and the rear sections of the house have eight-over-two lights. There is stained glass in the stair-hall windows. There are no shutters.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof has various gables. The west bay tower has conical roof. The northeast bay tower has a flat roof with balustrade. The roof is covered in rectangular slate and the conical tower roof is in a scale pattern.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is a simple cornice with two rows of small dentils and nine acanthus brackets under the right front bay, with others widely spaced on the east side where the attic story projects about 1-1/2 feet. The ridge coverings are green (copper?) with an elaborate central ridge. The downspouts connect with trough concealed in the cornice. The leader heads are distinctive.
- c. Dormers: There are four dormers: two with rounded edges, one flat skylight, and one eyebrow window on the west rear.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Under the main part of the house it is divided into several rooms, not always corresponding to the first floor. There is a wooden floor in the rear part with paneled and plastered walls.
- b. First floor: There is a central hall with a foyer and two rooms on each side. The ell contains a hall stair, pantry, kitchen, the old kitchen (directly behind the main stairs) and a side entrance under the stairs.
- c. Second floor: The main rooms are arranged as on the first floor with a later bath over the north end of the hall. There are three small bedrooms in the ell and one small original bathroom.

- d. Third floor: There is a large library, approximately 36 feet x 24 feet, across the entire north front of the house with a sloping ceiling. A narrow hall with storage rooms and built-in cupboards is to the west. There is a skylight to the roof in the closet to the east. Storage rooms are at the rear and there is an unfinished attic along the west side.
2. Stairways: The main hall stairway has four runs with landings, turned balusters, and stained glass windows. There is a secondary stair (dog-leg) to the west of the main staircase.
3. Flooring: Hardwood throughout house except cellar which is pine in the rear and concrete in the main part.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The front hall is paneled in oak with a beamed ceiling. Walls, where not paneled, are plastered. The front room on the north side has low wainscoting, two arched recesses which are paneled flanking the fireplace, dentiled entablature, and frieze with a pattern of stylized foliage in low relief. The dining room has paneling to the height of the fireplace and door frame with a band, approximately 2 feet to the ceiling, of rinceau and garland patterns imitating Spanish leather. There is a dentiled cornice and elaborate inset sideboard on the south wall. The rear portion of the cellar has paneled and plastered walls and the front of the cellar under the main part of the house has whitewashed stone walls.
5. Doorways and doors: There are pocket doors in the first floor rooms, but two on the south have been replaced with double doors opening out (pocket doors now concealed). The doors to the turret-study, off of the south front room, are later.
6. Decorative features and trim: There are fireplaces throughout the house, many are very elaborate. The hall fireplace is of red sandstone and has large voussoirs and panel above mantel shelf carved in low relief with dragons and swags around a central vase. The front room to the north has a fireplace of large slabs of yellowish stone, probably onyx. The south front room also has a fireplace of large onyx slabs. The rear room on the north has a simple, uncarved red marble fireplace. The dining room fireplace is red marble in a large pattern. There is a wooden spindle screen on the second floor overlooking the stairs. The dining room and lower hall ceilings and upper zones above paneling have original embossed Lincrusta paper imitating leather.
7. Hardware: Most doors have wooden doorknobs.

8. Heating: There is an oil burning furnace for steam heat. Radiators for the main part of the house are located in pockets below floor grates, but are exposed in rear of house and in upper floors. The third floor library has an old gas-burning fireplace
9. Lighting: Gas pipe butts can be seen throughout the house. There is now modern electricity throughout, often in fixtures of indeterminate date, but clearly post-gas, except in the hall, which has original wrought iron chandeliers with gas candles.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The front of the house faces northeast. The house is located on a corner lot at Hillside Avenue and Washington Avenue, on land that slopes southeast.
2. Landscaping and walks: The front of the house is reached by a diagonal walk from the corner of Washington Avenue and Hillside Avenue, between heavy hedges. There is a large lawn to the south and southeast. Concrete walks lead to the front, side, and rear doors.

Prepared by Daniel D. Reiff
Survey Associate
Cambridge Historical Commission
October 27, 1967

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of a cooperative project between the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC), Albert B. Wolfe, Chairman, and the Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service. The project followed a previous one conducted during the summer of 1964 under the same auspices and was initiated in September 1967 and completed in June 1969. It was under the general direction of Robert Bell Rettig, Associate Survey Director of the CHC, and James C. Massey, Chief, HABS. Miss Susan Maycock, CHC Survey Associate and graduate student in architectural history at Boston University, was responsible for the historical data; the architectural data was written by Daniel D. Reiff, CHC Survey Associate who was at that time a Harvard University doctoral candidate in the Department of Fine Arts; and the photographs were taken by George M. Cushing, Boston. Certain data was supplied by Dr. Bainbridge Bunting, CHC Survey Director and Professor of Art and Architectural History at the University of New Mexico. The records were edited by Denys Peter Myers, Principal Architectural Historian, HABS, and Deborah Stephens, Architectural Historian, HABS.